
The Exclusive Copper Hoard Objects: Distribution in Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract: *The Copper Hoard Culture, characterized by numerous copper artefacts found at various archaeological sites, has intrigued archaeologists. These artefacts, referred to as "Copper Hoard Tools," were primarily discovered in hoards and belong to a non-Harappan culture from the proto-historic phase of Ancient India. The discovery of these copper implements has significantly impacted Indian archaeology, revealing a culture that is both geographically and technologically widespread. This culture spans a large area within the country, mainly in the upper and middle Ganga-Yamuna Doab, with the tools being noted for their diverse and distinct features. The Copper Hoard implements include flat axes, battle axes, bars, chisels, arrowheads, anthropomorphic figures, harpoons, antennae swords, adzes, spearheads, and more. Among these, five objects—anthropomorphic figures, antennae swords, harpoons, hooked swords, and lanced heads—are found exclusively in Copper Hoards and not other contemporary cultures, marking them unique to the Copper Hoard Culture. This paper describes the zones of Copper hoard expansion in India and provides detailed descriptions of exclusive objects and specific Copper hoard sites within the core zone of the districts in Uttar Pradesh.*

Keywords: Copper Hoard Culture, Proto-historic, Anthropomorphic Figures, Antennae Swords, Harpoons, Exclusive Objects, Uttar Pradesh

Introduction

The first copper hoard discovery occurred in 1822 at the site of Bithur in Kanpur district; since then, many copper hoard sites have been discovered in different parts of India (Asiatic Research XIV: 1822). Copper hoard tools play a significant role in Indian archaeology in general. Several states have reported finding Copper hoard tools, including Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, and parts of the Deccan. They are mainly called "Copper Hoard Tools" since most of these artefacts were found in hoards. The primary copper hoard implements are flat axes, battle axes, bars, bar celts, rings, chisel, arrowheads, anthropomorphic figures, harpoons, antennae swords, adzes, spearheads, and many more implements that are occasionally found. The copper hoard culture covers a large area in the Indian subcontinent, but the main concentration of these tools is confined to the Indo-Ganga

divide of western Uttar Pradesh, regions of Bihar and the Chota Nagpur region of Jharkhand (Dixit, 1979). Many scholars have divided the entire area into different zones and regions based on the concentration of copper hoard sites. Makkhan Lal divided the entire area associated with Copper hoards into three different zones (Makkhan Lal 1981: 66), while Krishna Kumar divided the entire area of OCP and associated copper hoards into seven regions and four zones. (Kumar, 2008). Based on the distribution of the copper hoard sites, the entire area can also be divided into five parts.

The Sarasvati and Drishadvati Valley region roughly comprises the Sutlaj, the Sabi, and the Yamuna basin, covered by eastern Punjab, eastern Haryana and Delhi. Many copper hoard sites are identified in this area.

The entire Upper Ganga Valley is divided into three parts viz: Western Upper Ganga Valley, Central Upper Ganga Valley and Eastern Upper Ganga Valley; the Western Upper Ganga Valley comprises the Upper Ganga-Yamuna Doab, which covers the area of Western Uttar Pradesh, Kumayan Hills and Northeastern Rajasthan. This region also consists of a large number of Copper hoard sites. The Central Upper Ganga Valley includes the Central Ganga-Yamuna Doab region, which covers Central Uttar Pradesh. The Eastern Upper Ganga Valley comprises the Lower Ganga-Yamuna doab region, covering parts of Central Uttar Pradesh and Northern Madhya Pradesh.

The Middle Ganga Valley covers part of Eastern Uttar Pradesh, and very few Copper Hoard sites have come to light from this region. The Lower Ganga Valley, Chota Nagpur Plateau and the Highlands of Orrisa comprise three different geographical areas and a cluster of Copper hoard sites are found in this zone. The entire region of South Eastern Bihar, Jharkhand, South Western Bengal, Orrisa and South Eastern Madhya Pradesh also have a vast cluster of Copper hoard sites. The Indian Peninsular region, which includes Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, and South Western Madhya Pradesh, has reported scattered finds of Copper hoard Tools.

Hence, as elaborated above, the copper hoard sites are scattered throughout India from North to South and East to West. There are many Copper hoard sites where copper objects were reported along with other cultural remains; in Lothal, the copper objects were reported from the late Harappan phase; in Mitathal, the copper objects were reported from the late Siswal phase; in Chandoli a piece of antenna dirk was found from a chalcolithic phase, and in Rakhigrahi and Saipai the copper objects were reported along with the Ochre coloured pottery ware. Objects of these hoards have always been accidental discoveries made while clearing land, excavating canals, building roads, or sometimes in local metal markets.

Copper Hoard Implements

The typology of Copper hoard implements plays a significant role in understanding the culture of the Copper hoard tool users because aside from the objects and some of

the pottery presumed to be associated with it, there is very little information on which to base a reconstruction of that people's society. The copper hoards contain a variety of tools that are found in clusters. These objects can be roughly distributed into three categories according to their features and shapes: Domestic tools, War and Hunting tools and Agricultural tools. Fish hooks, knives, razors, rings, and anthropomorphic figures can be included in domestic items. Axes, flat axes, shouldered axes, lugged shouldered axes, celts, and chisels are included in the agricultural tools. Arrowheads, swords, antennae swords, hook swords, spearheads, lance heads, parasu, harpoons, double axes, and hooked spears are included in war and hunting tools.

In this paper, the tools termed as 'Exclusive Copper Hoard Objects' are found mainly in the core area of the Copper Hoard Culture, and the rest are counted as other copper hoard objects because they were found along with the other contemporary cultures.

Exclusive Copper Hoard Objects- Anthropomorphic Figures, Antennae Swords, Harpoons, Hooked Swords and Lanced Heads.

Anthropomorphic Figure: The copper anthropomorphic figures are so named because they look like stylized human figurines and are one of the enigmatic objects retrieved from many archaeological contexts in India. Anthropomorphic figures are a significant part of Copper hoards, and they generally have forearms that are incurved and sharpened on the outer edge and legs that are plain. The arms are thinner than the head, which is further thickened by beating from the top. There are also various typological varieties in anthropomorphic figures found from different sites, with some having long legs, while some others have short or butt ends; few anthropomorphs even have straight hands, while some portrayals have curved arms.

Antennae Sword: The antennae swords have long, broad leaf-shaped blades along with a mid-rib and a large grip with two antennae hilts bifurcated at the butt.

Harpoon: The harpoons may have been used for hunting big animals. It has a broad leaf-shaped blade with four to six barbs arranged bilaterally on the shaft. One or two lugs appear on each side of the shank, with an eyelet on one side. Harpoons have been divided into three types by Paul Yule based on their appearance (Yule 1985).

Hooked Sword: It has a leaf-shaped blade with a medial ridge. It contains a hook on the shaft, which bends backwards. There are two holes made on the shaft horizontally to fasten the grip (Yule 1985: 93).

Lance Head: This is more likely a harpoon but without a barb. The shape of the blade is like a broad leaf with a medial ridge. One hook appears on the shaft, which slightly curves backwards to the shaft.

Exclusive Copper Hoard Sites of Uttar Pradesh

As mentioned above, the concentration of the copper hoard sites is mainly confined to the Ganga-Yamuna Doab region. In Figure 1, all the exclusive copper hoard sites of

Uttar Pradesh are plotted. There are 30 sites in Uttar Pradesh that contain exclusive copper hoard implements; detailed descriptions of the sites are given in the following paragraphs.

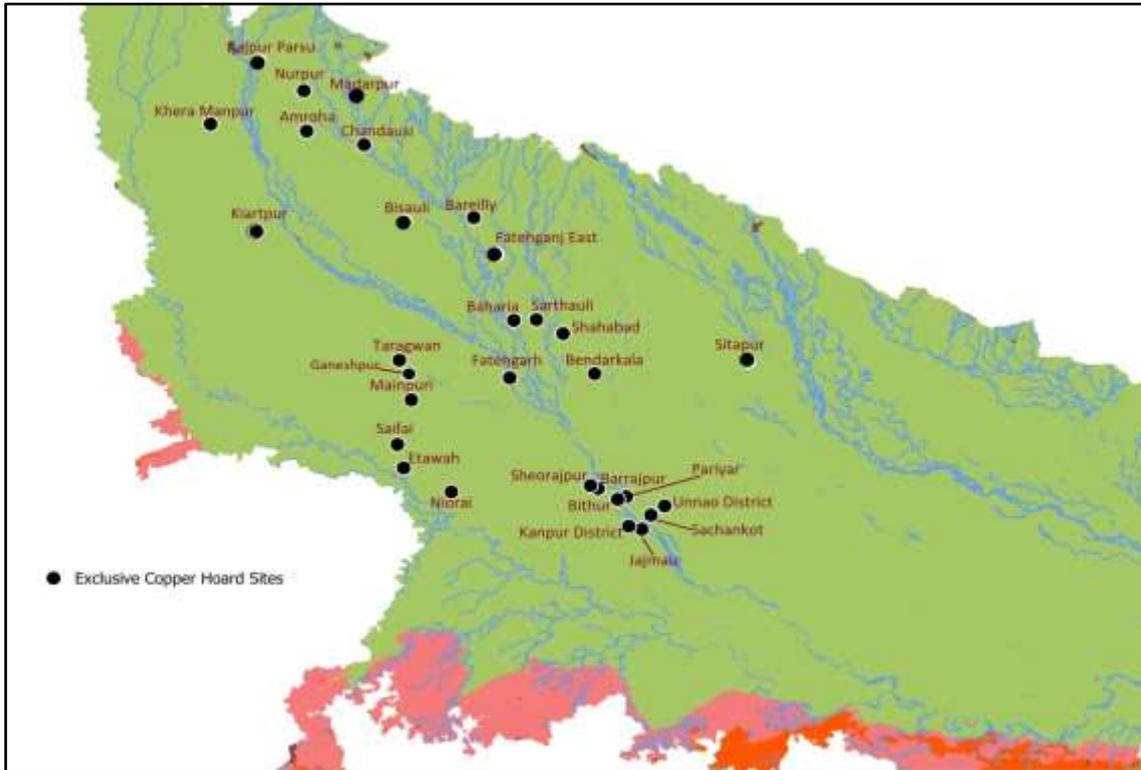


Figure 1: Exclusive Copper Hoard Sites of Uttar Pradesh

Amroha

This site is located in the Muradabad district of Uttar Pradesh. In 1986, Tarik Ahmad Christ sold a flat axe, a shouldered axe and a harpoon allegedly from this site to the National Museum of Delhi. Paul Yule has mentioned that the information was given by R. P. Sharma, and according to him, it is not confirmed that all objects belong to the same hoard because the patina of each object was different (Yule 1989: 201).

Bahariya

This site (OCP and Bahariya) is located 51 km southeast of the district headquarters of Sahajahanpur. Few Copper objects were found at a depth of 91 cm below the surface. G. R. Sharma excavated this area from where a harpoon and a hooked sword were recorded. Evidences of habitation were seen at a depth of 1.07 m, which was clearly below the finding spot. Apart from OCP, no other associated cultures were recorded at the site (Sharma 1972: 42-43; Mishra and Mishra 1977: 437-43).

Bareilly Town

In 1986, Pramad Puri of Argun Nagar, Delhi, sold one flat axe and a harpoon, which had been collected from this area to the National Museum in Delhi (Yule 1989: 201). The exact findspot and circumstances are not known.

Barrajpur

This site is located in the Kanpur Dehat District of Uttar Pradesh. Harpoons were reported from this village. According to the typology of Paul Yule, those implements can be counted in the Type I and Type II varieties of Harpoons (Yule 1989: 201).

Bendarkala

This site is located in the Hardoi district. A unique harpoon was found from this site and kept in the State Museum of Lucknow in 1982 (Yule 1985: 8).

Bisauli

This site (OCP and Copper Hoard) is situated in the Badayaun District. OCP cultural remains were recovered from the site in the excavation conducted by B. B. Lal in 1949. The copper hoard objects reported from the site are three anthropomorphs, one bar, one flat axe ingot and six harpoons, all of which were acquired by Bharat Kala Bhawanwas in 1936-37 (Lal 1951: 25).

Bithur

This site is nearly 19 km away in the northwest direction of the Kanpur district and is situated on the southern bank of the river Ganga. Copper hoards were reported incidentally from this area and were usually found at the site or from the deposits in the temple located there, with the precise locations being unknown (Yule 1985: 9). Many implements were found at this site, which included twenty axes, eight harpoons, a chisel, three weeding chisels, two antennae swords and a clump of metal (Kumar 2018: 74).

Chandausi

Chandausi is a village in Moradabad district. Dr Jagdish Gupta of the University of Allahabad collected all the objects from this site, including one shoulder axe, four flat axes, four harpoons, one blade of a spear, one antenna sword, and one anthropomorphic figure. The antennae sword from this site has some special features as the base of the blade has two holes, one on either side of the mid-rib, preferably used for attaching a cove to the hilt (IAR 1966-67: 81).

Etawah District

The copper hoard objects were reported from an unknown locality in this region. One hooked sword and one harpoon were reported, and the circumstances of the finding are unknown (Yule 1985: 90; Gupta 1981: 30; Lal 1980-81: 70-71).

Fatehganj East

This site is located on the bank of Bahgul River in the district of Bareilly. Two anthropomorphic figures have been reported from this site. The figures were noticed by a local villager who sold them to the ragman which was later attained by Colonel R. Rawat. The anthropomorphs were believed to be placed one over another before being unearthed. The typology of the anthropomorphs is unique from others as the hands of the anthropomorphs were longer than their body (Mishra *et al.* 2009: 67-71).

Fatehgarh

This site is in the Farrukhabad district and yielded 15 copper hoard implements. Not much is known about the site. Thirteen antennae swords, one lance head and miscellaneous anthropomorphs have been reported (Anderson 1883: 396).

Ganeshpur

This site is located in Mainpuri District of Uttar Pradesh. In June 2022, local villagers reported a copper hoard, which was later examined by the Archaeological Survey of India. From this site, 61 copper implements were found, including two spears, six short swords, seven large swords, 46 harpoons and 16 anthropomorphs. The remains of OCP were also reported from this site (Kumar 2022: 3-10).

Jajmau

A fragment of an axe and broken type II Harpoon was incidentally found in 1955 at this site in the Kanpur District. These implements were taken from the collection of Dr. Raj Kumar Sinha of Kanpur (Yul 1989: 202).

Kanpur District

From an unknown site, five harpoons, two lance heads, two weeding chisels, three chisels, three antennae swords, three shouldered axes and nine flat axes were reported (Kumar 2018: 157; Gupta 1985-86: 98-99; Sharma 1986-87: 202).

Khera Manpura

This location comes under the Bulandshahar district. This site has reported one lance head, one shouldered axe, one flat axe, and OCP sherds (Shastri 1951: 4; Dikshit 1968: 50).

Kiratpur

This site on the right bank of the Kali Nadi River, a tributary of the Ganga, is also located in Bulandshahar district and at a distance of 3 km from Lal Qila, the single cultural OCP site. In 1970, one miscellaneous anthropomorph, eight bangles and two axes were reported (Yule 1985: 16-17). After that, Kiratpur was excavated by R. C. Gaur, and OCP sherds were recorded at this site (Gaur, 1981, 73-76).

Madarpur

A labourer accidentally found copper hoard objects near the Thakurdvara village of Madarpur District in the year 2000. This hoard contains 31 anthropomorphic figures, and when the hoard was examined, it was found that all the anthropomorphs were placed one over another in situ. The physical features of these anthropomorphs were different compared to other anthropomorphs found to date. One hand of each anthropomorph is turned upward, which gives a feeling of muscularity. The OCP sherds were also found in the nearby area of the copper hoard find spot. An excavation was conducted in which a layer of OCP culture was found (Sharma *et al.* 2001-02: 33-34).

Mainpuri

Mainpuri is a district in Uttar Pradesh. A farmer reportedly found two flat axes, a harpoon and six sings, producing it to a district magistrate, which was handed over to the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1868. These objects were found when ploughing up a field. According to the farmer, these objects were scattered in a heap without any arrangement in depth in the cultivation field (Yule 1985: 18). Recently, in June 2022, a big copper hoard of 77 copper objects was recovered by a farmer while levelling an agriculture field in the same area.

Niorai

This site comes under the Etawah district, where in 1987, a harpoon and a lance head were reported from the village's habitational area. The objects were then acquired by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, which was later handed over to the Royal Society of Antiquaries of the North in Denmark (Paul 1985: 21; Anderson 1883: 396).

Nurpur

This site is located in the Moradabad district of Uttar Pradesh, and two anthropomorphs have been recorded here (Sharma, 1991).

Pariyar

This site is located on the left bank of the river Ganga, opposite to Bithur. This area is related to the Ramayana story, in which Sita was abandoned by Ram's younger brother Lakshman. The site was excavated in 1978-79 by B. B. Lal and K. N. Dixit. The excavation revealed many cultural deposits and the cultural sequences excavated from the site were OCP, black and red ware, black slipped ware, burnished grey ware, painted grey wares, northern black polished wares and sunga-kushan. Copper hoard objects, viz. one shouldered axe, one flat axe, one sword fragment and several harpoons, were also reported from this site (Lal and Dikshit 1980: 26-31).

Rajpur Parsu

This site is located on the eastern bank of the river Ganga in Bijnor District. B. B. Lal excavated the site in 1945, where five small trenches were taken to learn about the ancient cultural occupation of the area (Lal 1951). One trench was taken in the garden area near the site, and the other four were taken at the mound area, which was 2-3 m in height. Copper hoards were recorded in a mango grove on the northeastern periphery of the mound. The occupational strata went up to a depth of 8 feet in the mound area. OCP culture similar to Bisauli was found at the lowest level in the excavation (Lal 1951: 35).

Saifai-Lichchwai

This site is situated 18 km north of the Etawah railway station. It was excavated by B. B. Lal, B. K. Thapar and L. M. Wahal from 1969-70 to 1971-72 (IAR 1970-71: 38; 1971-72: 46-47). A Copper hoard was accidentally found during the ploughing up of a field in August 1969 (Yule 1989: 203). The locals claimed that this area yielded a large hoard

strewn over ten sq.m. in an unkempt heap with over 200 metal objects, one on top of the other. L. M. Wahal was only able to acquire a few of those objects, with the rest being disposed of by the villagers. Hence, in May 1970, L. M. Wahal took a trial trench over the find spot of the copper objects, which had been collected earlier in 1969 and found a hooked sword and one harpoon along with OCP at a depth of 45cm. For the first time, this excavation provided convincing evidence regarding the cultural association between OCP and Copper Hoard Culture.

Sarthauli

This site is located in the Shahjahanpur district, and a battle axe, a harpoon, and five lanceheads were reported here. A district magistrate reported all the objects to the State Museum of Lucknow in 1921 (Lal 1951: 28).

Sitapur District

This site reported one weeding chisel, four flat axes, one harpoon and four chisels (Gupta 1985-86: 99; Sharma 1987: 42).

Taragwan

This site is in the Etha district, where in 1966-67 copper hoard objects were reported. Eight copper implements, including an anthropomorphic figure, were found. The exact findspot and circumstances are unknown (Gupta 1981: 30).

Sachankot

One copper harpoon was discovered at this site located in the Unnao district. The harpoon is presently non-evaluable, and little is known about the object (Yule 1989: 203).

Shahabad

This site is in the Hardoi district and was explored by Jagdish Gupta and V. N. Mishra. Dr. Jagdish Gupta of Allahabad University reported several copper hoard objects from Shahabad that the National Museum New Delhi acquired in 1960. Apart from copper hoard implements, Gupta period terracotta figurines, OCP, PGW, NBPW and Medieval Coins were also found. The copper hoard materials found included axes, swords and harpoons (Yule 1989: 203).

Sheorajpur

This site comes in Kanpur Dehat District and has reported one battle axe, lance head, chisel, antenna sword, three flat axes and three anthropomorphs. All the figures were kept in the State Museum of Lucknow in 1910 (Lal 1951: 29).

Unnao District

A significant hoard was reported from this district, which consisted of an antennae sword, a weeding chisel, a lance head, a shouldered axe ingot, five flat axes, etc., with the exact findspot not known (Sharma 1987: 41; Kumar 2018: 79).

Conclusion

All the sites mentioned above are located in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab region. The Gangetic copper hoards show many variations in the unearthed objects. The types and typology of the finds have been briefly described in the book ' *Metal Works of the Bronze Age in India*' by Paul Yule (1885). The region of Khetri may have been the source of the metal used in the Copper Hoards found from the Doab. The few objects, viz., anthropomorphic figures, antennae swords, harpoons, hooked swords, and lanced heads, are considered exclusive because those objects are not found in any other distinct culture of the time. Ganeshwar in Rajasthan is a chalcolithic culture which yielded many copper objects such as arrowheads, spearheads, bangles, fish hooks, etc. (IAR 1981-82; 1983-84; 1987-88; 1988-89). The Exclusive objects are not only confined to Uttar Pradesh but also reported from Uttrakhand, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Kerala.

There are some locations in the periphery area of the core zone of Copper Hoard finds from where exclusive copper objects in a single quantity have been reported, like Shavinipatti, Kankasa, Modhera, Patan, etc., from where antennae sword or antennae dagger are reported. An antennae sword was reported from the extreme southern parts of India, such as in the Moongalaar Tea Estate in Kerala. This particular site is known for its Chalcolithic and megalithic pottery remains, and no other copper hoard site was reported nearby. There is also a single site in Tamilnadu where an antenna sword was reported accidentally during road construction. However, since no other copper objects were found with the cultural remains, this might indicate that the sword reached there by chance. On the basis of stray findings away from core areas, a hypothesis that can be produced is that these objects were either taken by the people migrating from the core area or imported by the inhabitants of the peripheral zone.

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